Hospital Visits

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/21985105.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Epithet Erased (Cartoon)
Relationships:	Sylvester "Sylvie" Ashling & Molly Blyndeff & Giovanni Potage, Sylvester "Sylvie" Ashling & Molly Blyndeff, Sylvester "Sylvie" Ashling & Giovanni Potage, Molly Blyndeff & Giovanni Potage
Characters:	Sylvester "Sylvie" Ashling, Molly Blyndeff, Giovanni Potage, Percival "Percy" King
Additional Tags:	Platonic Relationships, Hurt/Comfort
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2019-12-27 Words: 8,774 Chapters: 1/1

Hospital Visits

by AsilandWriting

Summary

Or: Four times Sylvie woke up uneasy after his trip to the museum and the one time he didn't.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

The first time Sylvie woke up he felt cold.

It must have only been an hour, if not less, since the incident, as he blinked his eyes open and was met with blinding florescent lights that appeared and disappeared in a line above him. He felt that instead of a scratchy transporting mat, he had been transferred to a soft bed, a moving one at that. He heard voices and he risked a slight tilt of his head, watching the nurses rolling him through corridors, noticing that he still was wearing his own doctor's coat and hoodie. They weren't rushing, there was no need, he was in no immediate danger. He was just extremely exhausted, taking a breath through his nose, his half-opened eyes closing once more. He felt his breath come short only a second after, lungs struggling for a moment and he took a big gulp to calm the pain down. The damage Mera had inflicted must have fragmented, if not completely broken, all his upper ribs and it would have been excruciating if the pieces had poked into his lungs, that was for sure.

Back with Molly, he had still been allowed to sit in the carrying mat, which, sure, was bad for the bones, but had alleviated the pressure on his lungs. Now the opposite was true, and the pain made itself known as his sight started to dim around the corners of his vision and he had to give in to sleep once more.

The second time he woke up he felt dizzy.

He noticed that he was still in bed, but this time unmoving, covered to the chin with a blanket, that harsh light from before blinding him now even more as it was positioned right above him. Sitting up, his body flinching harshly and unwillingly, he looked around his new environment, only to squint at it. His glasses were gone, but even without them he identified it as the most boring hospital room he could have imagined. White floors, walls, door, a single window, another empty bed, which had a bedside table. On his own he made out his glasses and he sighed in relief, trying, but just as fast giving up, on reaching them, his torso being pulled. The nurses and doctors, that had been checking his vitals, were gone, replaced with a heart monitor and Sylvie finally noticed the steady beeping from it, a frown forming.

(For whatever reason they seemed to have hooked him up and he couldn't understand why. He had his epithet almost stolen, yes, it had been out of his body for a few minutes, but he had not been shot after all, his body had still been doing fine. He wouldn't shut down now, now that he had it back. But again, no one knew what effects an epithet erasure could have on the human body after all. Even worse if it was long term).

(It had hurt after all, waves of pressure, hot, hotter, bones gnashing and crushing and creaking. He had heard the hum of the amulet and he had felt his lungs expand and had felt something tug at his heart and had willed his whole being to cooperate, trying to move. And he had felt the sudden emptiness that filled him after the glow from orange to green and then to nothing. He had felt the cold spread through his being as he was tossed to the side, Molly screaming out in terror for him as he landed on the ground like a wet bag of hay. He had been clutching his chest, because it was cold and it hurt and it still hurts, because broken bones hurt, but there was so much more to it. Freezing cold emptiness filling up where once drowsy and soft as sheep warmth lay, his body curling up around the invisible wound.)

(It had been agonizing, to hear his own epithet used against Molly, his new friend, his first friend, a friend he tried to save and failed to even help the slightest bit. The one he had attacked first out of manipulation and then out of pure uselessness.)

(That thought made him even more dizzy.)

He shook his head to clear it and lifted his arm to see if he had been drugged already, asking himself if the pain was really so unbearable or if they had simply forgotten about it in his peaceful sleep. Instead he only managed to figure out that he had been stripped off his usual attire, being greeted with a white robe instead, hitting his head back into the pillow. The pain was getting worse and he noticed the pressure around his middle a tenfold when he laid back down, regretting his life choice right in that moment and struggling to get the same momentum as before to sit up. He was about to lift his arms to get out of the blanket, slowly to not pull any more of his more than sore muscles, before a nurse came walking right back in, noticing his movement.

Then Sylvie blacked out once more, now thoroughly filled with pain killers and the declaration that he will need to have his chest bandaged up to try to force the bones back in place and that he would need to stay a few days for checkups. She was about to ask him if he had anybody to call, but he was too far gone, too numb to ask what she meant or how long “a few days” actually were.

The third time he woke up, he felt watched.

He was greeted with a dimmed room (thank god) and light was streaming from the window to paint the walls gold. However, he could neither tell if it was morning or evening already or really take any reassurance from that, for his body was still sore and in pain and he sensed the presence of another person in the room. For the slightest of seconds, a momentary panic settled in, before he had to shake himself and say, no, no one could enter his room without the hospital knowing. He was safe, no matter what, so whoever was there, they were not here to harm him (again). As he tried to force his eyes to cooperate with him without the aid of his glasses, he leaned his head to the left and noticed the obvious in blue clad police officer in the visiting chair, reading a newspaper article. When he made himself known to be awake, waving his hand, the officer turned and nodded curtly at him.

“We haven’t been officially introduced,” she greets him, stepping right over the bush Sylvie was about to beat around, monotonous and professional, “Percival King. I was the detective at the history museum that tried to apprehend the Banzai Blasters. I’m the one spearheading the investigation over the Arsene Amulet burglary. I took note that you, Mr.- “

“Doctor, actually.”

“…Of course, excuse my tactlessness. Doctor Sylvester Ashling. You have been at the scene of the crime as witness as well as victim of the Arsene Amulet. May I ask you some questions about that night? I would like to protocol your side of the story.” She waves her hand towards the heart monitor, “I do understand if you are not ready to speak, for you have been put under terrible stress and discomfort. I can visit another time, if today doesn’t suit.”

“No, I understand. It’s no bother.” He stretched himself, wincing, only then to point beside him. “If you’d be kind enough to get this bed in an angle and hand me my glasses, I tell you all I know as best I can, detective.”

From that point on it only took a minute to get the remote to have the bed move up so he could half sit, half lay, pillows situated under his arms and neck and then half an hour at most to explain why he happened to be there and how he had managed to get himself hurt. He hid, even though he had said to be truthful, some details. (Molly had been there because of him and his sleeping dust after all and he had attacked her because Mera had led him by his nose, but he couldn’t just go and admit that. And, hey, she wasn’t asking for those scenes, so it wouldn’t come up in other testimonies.)

(He hoped.)

Scribbling in her notebook, Percy looked up one more time, her face still as stoic as ever. “Thank you for your cooperation, Doctor. If I may ask one last question? How do you feel?”

“How I feel?” Sylvie blinked, before he saw her nod, thinking of an appropriate answer. “I suppose, I feel sore. Since my bones have been partially fractured it was to be expected. But that is not what you are asking for, is it?”

Before she could speak, he continued.

“After the Arsene Amulet took my epithet, well… The only explanation I can give for what I felt was hollow.” He took a breath, chest expanding slowly. “Whatever it did, it hollowed a part of me out and left a cleft open. It was as if ice was stuck where it should be, and that frigid feeling spread through my body.”

“I see.” She closed her eyes, then her features softened. “As helpful as that information is, how do you feel, Doctor? Still any discomfort?”

Sylvie felt like a fish out of water, a sheep separated from its herd, and he let out a strangled “Uh”. He was on one hand surprised by her curiosity for his well-being and on the other hand perplexed about her demeanor, even if only for a second, changing. But she was a police officer after all, it was her job and duty to care about the citizens of Sweet Jazz City, so he shook his head, nodding to her direction.

“Of course, my ribs will need some time to heal, but I’m fine.”

The sigh the woman let out made him sit up in attention, and she smiled slightly, as she stood up and declared with a determined expression: “I assure you, Doctor. I will find the amulet and make sure no one else will come to harm. Have my word for it.”

Sylvie’s hand automatically rose to his chest at that, gripping the hem of his shirt, before he nodded seriously.

“I’m sure you will do it, Miss King. It cannot fall into the wrong hands.” Then he let his shoulders fall. “It would be too much to ask, to still take a look at it to examine its properties when you retrieve it, wouldn’t it?”

“I suppose… if someone with your knowledge, Doctor, could find a way to make the amulet unserviceable, we could arrange an agreement.”

With that she was leaving, and Sylvie took a soft relieved breath, exhaustion pulling at him, as he leaned back and closed his eyes, cramping his hands into the mattress under him. He felt drowsy and he knew the conversation had demanded more energy than he had to spare. However, he did smile at the fact that he still had a chance to take a look and find out what the amulet had in it, what else it could maybe do.

Before sleep could claim him however, he heard a thud of two bodies colliding and the softest “Oh! Sorry!”, overshadowed by the officers “Excuse me, Miss.” and he had to force himself to not snap his whole body up and out of the bed, his eyes wide as he watched Percy speak to the person outside.

(It had to be her, right? She was soft spoken at the museum, too, who else would come to his door and get spooked, only to let out the softest possible gasp?)

“Oh, I didn’t expect to see you so soon again.”

“Percy!” (No, yeah, it had to be her) “I wasn’t expecting to see you so soon either!”

“Well, it was really nice to see you, Molly, keep that head of yours high, yes?”

“Of course, madam! Bye, bye!”

Sylvie watched the officer leave with her hand waving down, while Molly moved past the doorframe and waved back at her through the threshold. She kept her hand moving until Percy disappeared behind the corner, before she clicked the door shut and sighed out, a little bit of nerves being released. He couldn’t help watching her in puzzlement, not knowing if she was here to see him specifically or if she was, like Percy, here to ask him about the incident as well.

However, when she turned to him, he could see her smile the biggest smile he had ever seen on her and for a moment he felt like a sheep in headlights, lifting his arm in an awkward “Hey”.

Molly didn’t seem to stop that in her excitement as she rushed over to him, backpack straps tightly held in her hands, before she pulled it from her left side and let it fall to the floor. She did seem to hesitate however as she stretched her arms out and was about to embrace him, noticing the cables that sneaked from under the blanket to the monitor, her movement faltering. Then she stepped forward, and with way less momentum she put her hands around him and gave him a soft squeeze, Sylvie stiff as a board as his chin landed on her shoulder in an angle, looking up at the ceiling as she circled her arms around his frame.

(Sylvie felt a wave of nausea, his nose burning, but he couldn’t bring himself to move, his breath coming short, the thought that her first instinct of seeing him was to smile and not to cover in fear, making his chest squirm.)

But as fast as the hug had been initiated, as fast it stopped and she let go of him, Molly pushing at his shoulders so he would lean back on his pillows, a soft huff leaving him as his back relaxed into the mattress. Molly however started to tamper him, as she reached for the blanket and tucked it back to his chest leaving his arms outside, so he could still move them, before she fluffed the pillows up. He tried to stop her, opening his mouth, but then she turned to her bag, kneeling down as she shuffled through it.

“How are you feeling, Sylvie?” she then questioned, pulling a pile of crumbled, but still healthy-looking, flowers out, turning her torso around so she could open and search through the bedside table drawer. There she found what she was looking for, a tiny vase and she put the flowers inside, a water bottle appearing out of her bag, so she could fill the glass. “Sorry I couldn’t make it sooner. School and nightshift.”

He watched her as she pushed the flowers around in their tiny new home, rearranging them, before she put them down, a satisfied smile as she admired her work. In the vase he could make out peonies, as well as hydrangeas, both of them bright yellow, a smirk plastering itself on his face.

“It’s alright, Molly. It wouldn’t have been good timing to be honest.”

“Well… I did tell you to call me, but you never did. So, I got a little antsy,” she giggled, pulling her hair back slightly, “I wanted to make sure you’re fine, so I called in at the reception if it was okay to still come over right after school. Glad I could!”

He smiled a bit sheepishly, scratching his cheek: “You didn’t miss anything really. I’ve been sleeping the whole time anyway.”

“For 3 days?”

“What?”

Molly turned this time with a concerned expression adorning her face, watching in his blank face for a joke, before she mentioned outside: “It’s been 3 days since the museum stuff, didn’t you notice? It’s close to evening, that is why I’m so late…”

“…Oh.” Sylvie swallowed, before he closed his eyes. “No, I didn’t notice. I suppose they drugged me harder than I initially had thought.” At her expression, he tried to soothe her. “I’m not in any pain, my chest is just a little tender. They told me I could leave any day now, since they can’t really do anything for me here. It will heal by itself.”

“Are you sure?” She clasped her hands together. “She… Mera did grab you and tossed you, and her epithet- “

“I’m okay, my epithet is still here with me thanks to you and about the damage, it’s water under the bridge.”

Molly seemed to ease at that, before she shuffled through her bag once more, Sylvie leaning forward to watch what she was doing. But whatever she pulled out, she hid behind her back,

standing up straight as a rod as she stared at him with a grin, and Sylvie leaned into his pillows, not knowing what he was supposed to do.

“Remember when I told you I’d send you a toy from my store?”

Sylvie did remember, but he had thought she’d deliver it by mail or have someone else do it. He hadn’t thought she’d personally come, his heart clenching in a way he was unsure of. Instead he nodded, his eyes slipping a bit, forcing himself to not nod off just yet, watching his own sleeping dust starting to spread. Molly didn’t seem to notice since she stepped forward once more, smiling wider.

“Well, I didn’t lie!” And now she pushed her hands forward, Sylvie blinking at them. “Here, this is for you.”

Numbly he moved his hands towards her own, as she let the gift fall into his hands, his brain processing what it was.

A tiny sheep.

It was a plush of some sort, a lilac sheep with green wool and buttons for eyes. He knew immediately by the texture that it was high quality, soft and silky and he pulled it towards himself, already in his habit of holding his own sheep, the movement engraved into his brain. He petted it one, two, three times, before he grinned and he looked up at Molly, who was waiting anxiously for a response. She was still smiling, but he saw her fidget, her hands clasping at her hoodie.

“I know you have your herd of counting sheep, but when I saw it, I immediately thought of you. I thought you’d like it, since, you know…” She brushed her finger under her nose. “I thought it’s cute.”

“It is. I love it,” Sylvie replied, a small laugh leaving him, “Thank you.”

Molly seemed to burst at the praise, standing even taller: “I’m relieved! I wasn’t sure if you’d like a stuffed animal, but usually you get one in a hospital!” She giggled, before she widened her eyes, putting her hands out in a waiting motion, outstretched and almost hitting his glasses off of his nose. “Hold that thought! I almost forgot. Give me a second!”

Sylvie watched her half amused, half curious as she ran towards the door, following with his eyes as she searched her pockets for something, before the door closed behind her. He wasn’t worried that she had just left, she was too genuine for that, plus her backpack was still sprawled out on the floor.

There while he decided he’d just lay back, his body refusing to cooperate, as his head lolled to one side. He didn’t know how much time passed, petting the sheep over and over again, the texture of the wool tangling between his fingers, as he lulled himself to sleep. He was almost gone, the quiet of the room heavy around him, but soon enough he heard the door open once more and Molly strolled in, quieter than before.

“Sylvie?” she murmured, unsure, probably afraid she’d wake him.

“Mh?”

“Oh, good.” This time she took the time to reach for the chair and scoot it over to him, before she planted herself on top of it. “We’re getting another visitor, if that’s okay? I heard the food here is the worst and you must be hungry if you slept so long.”

“Sure, I don’t mind,” he yawned, one hand going to his mouth, before he winced, grabbing his chest instead.

He hadn’t anticipated that this would make him cringe and Molly was right there as she pulled at his hand that was grabbing his chest.

“No, don’t do that! It might get worse…” Then she seemed to have an idea spark and she hummed, her green bubble enveloping the boy. “… that should help.”

Sylvie immediately felt the effect, as the pain slowed from a stabbing sensation to a dull throb and he sighed once more, finally a deep breath and not the shallow ones he had to endure. Still, he felt absolutely trashed, not trusting his mouth entirely, so instead he nodded absentmindedly.

“Thanks.”

“No problem,” came the reply, before he saw her wave her hands, finally noticing the shower of yellow, “Your powder is getting everywhere…”

He whispered in confirmation: “Yeah, it’s a side effect. If I get tired, they start to spread.”

“Oh, well, I don’t want to keep you awake. I can tell- “

She was too late, as both heard fast paced footsteps that stopped right at their doorway, and with a creeping realization, Sylvie made the connection of who the visitor might be.

“Don’t tell me you invite-?”

“There you are, **nerd!!!**”

“Of course you did…”

In all his glory stood Giovanni Potage, striking a pose as he had kicked the door open, his hands full with a pot he was holding. Sylvie held in a suffering sigh as the Banzai Blaster trudged in, weaving his way around the backpack and Molly’s chair to set the pot besides the flowers, afterwards waving his hand in front of his face.

“Man, you guys are going to choke in here, I’ll open the window,” he declared, before he brushed the curtains to the side and opened the offending window with a single swing from his arm. Soon after fresh wind blew in and the pollen that had started to gather on the covers were sucked away with the breeze, Molly watching, her eyes sparkling.

“Oh! That’s pretty.”

“Sure is, Bear Trap, but not for long, that snow is going to get the heck out of here.”

“It’s not snow,” Sylvie tried to growl, but just resigned to his fate, not able to lift his head, cheek mushing the pillow, eyes only weakly glaring at the newcomer, “It’s my sleeping dust. As long as I am not on full capacity, it will keep appearing.”

“Well, we can fix that!” Giovanni exclaimed, “We-, “he coughed, standing straighter as he brushed his hoodie off, Sylvie only noticing now that he was in casual attire, “Bear Trap made you soup, that should get you running in no time.”

“Ah.”

“Damn, kid, you could be a little more enthusiastic! I had to smuggle this in after all! They don’t let people get anything from home in when it’s edible! You know how hard it is to sneak in with a full pot?”

Sylvie tried to imagine Giovanni stealthily moving through the corridors, but he had to give up, not able to connect the ridiculous images Giovanni tried to paint.

Molly however seemed pleased, as she nodded at his explanation and she proudly stated: “We decided that you needed some company and especially some actual food.”

“Yes! We couldn’t do it legally, so the bad guy way had to do!”

“Yeah!”

Sylvie had to shake his head at that with a frown, he honestly wasn’t a fan of being associated with a villain. His first instinct was to ask why he was even here, the two of them had started completely on the wrong foot, and he was not about to or willing to change that anytime toon. However, he was aware Molly took a shining to him, and Sylvie really couldn’t disappoint her (not more that he already did). Nevertheless, they had done something nice for him and that was more than he could have hoped for.

He was touched, he truly was, but in the same breath he felt his body giving up on him, the pollen fastening the process, only realizing that Giovanni was grabbing his gift when it was already gone. He tried to protest, but when he opened his mouth, nothing came out and all he could do was glare at the man above him, who was inspecting the toy as if he was considering its worth. For a second Sylvie felt his breath hitch as Giovanni dangled the sheep, holding it on one foot, but Molly stopped him instead, seemingly realizing Sylvie’s distress.

“It’s my gift for him, please set it down.”

“It is? Should have known, just look at the stitches! You know how to pick them, good quality. You can learn from that cross stitch, too, Bear Trap. And hey, we can’t let it get covered in yellow.” He turned to the boy. “You said you do the weird yellow stuff when you’re tired?”

Sylvie was too groggy to wonder why a villain was fond of stitching, or to worry that he must have listened in before coming in, faking the loud footsteps, so he let his head sink back instead.

“Yep.”

“Well, watcha waiting for? Fall asleep on us, kid, so we can give you this back to cuddle with,” Giovanni grinned; a disapproving elbow hit to his side from Molly his payment.

Sylvie really, really wanted to argue with him now, but he had already given up as he closed his eyes and heard the other two shush each other, as if they could stop each other from being noisier than they already were. Somehow, he was grateful for it, the room having become livelier in seconds flat since their appearance. He sunk into his covers as he felt his breath deepen, and he could hear Molly pack her stuff and let out another shush, this time so he’d ride on this painless wave a little bit longer. Then he felt a larger hand pet him on top of his head and his shoulders loosened up, before those hands carefully pried his glasses off his nose, the frame clinking against the wood of the table.

The fourth time he woke up he felt disoriented.

He didn’t know what woke him up, the only thing he took notice of was the fact that the room was pitch black, the only exception the glowing monitor beside him. He needed to blink his eyes harshly, and he moved his arm carefully so he could rub at them, a yawn leaving him. He felt his chest cringe and he yearned for Molly to come back already, only then to shake his head and tell himself that he couldn’t just use her for her epithet. That wouldn’t make him any better than Mera and he was not about to go down that rabbit hole. Instead he moved his back upwards, glad the two of his visitors hadn’t set the bed back in its original position, sitting an absolute relief. This time he was able to reach for the glasses, protected by the sheep that was sitting right beside them, close enough to grab and he slipped them on, considering his surroundings.

He jumped a bit when he saw Giovanni sleep in the visitor chair, snoring with his mouth open, arms crossed, neck craning so far back that his head had to hurt.

Another look around and he could make out Molly curled up on top of the other bed, covered by blankets and cuddling a pillow to her chest. He had been sure the two had left when he had fallen asleep, visiting time was over hours ago, it must be around midnight now, if not later (earlier) in the day.

He cringed again, but this time from the sound beside him, Giovanni smacking his mouth, turning his head and Sylvie crunching up his nose. However, he didn’t have to make the decision to leave the man be or wake him for his horrible commotion, for he woke himself up, his hands stretching up above his head towards the sky, arching his back like a cat. He seemed to crack some of his bones back into place, as he as well took in his surroundings, when his head moved towards Sylvie. He didn’t jump, much to Sylvie’s own embarrassment, and instead scratched the place behind his ear, letting out another yawn.

“Hey, kid.”

Sylvie was unsure how he should proceed, the usual anger that came with the nickname boiling inside of him, so he went with the mature route: “Hello.”

“You look surprised, didn’t think we’d stay?”

He had read him like an open book and Sylvie hunched his shoulders as he pulled his legs closer to his body, ignoring the cables moving under his blanket. But he knew silence would confirm Giovanni’s thought process, and he had to dent that at least the tiniest bit. He wasn’t entirely vulnerable, yet.

“Of course not, the hospital doesn't allow visitors past visiting time, unless they are family. However that’s exactly what a villain would do, force entry. And forcing a child into that scheme as well.”

“Hey now, it’s not like I’d force Bear Trap to do anything she wasn’t 100 percent here for.”

Sylvie felt exposed as he shrugged: “I don’t see the point of staying.”

“Duh, to make sure you sleep fine. Plus, those doctors have been ignoring your door for hours. We asked the lady at the desk and she said something about, what was it… Brittle bones, and muscles holding it fine and bodies with epithets that can do something, and whatever…” He waved his hands, as if he was trying to shoo the thoughts away, that were clogging his progress. “What I was trying to say, you are a free man tomorrow, and we gonna get you out of this miserable room as soon as possible.”

Thank god for that, Sylvie did need to get back to work and sift through his waiting email after all. He had been out for half a week, and he hoped his coworkers had covered for him. Or at least the police told them what he had been tangled into, hoping for mercy. He shook his head, as he put his head on top of his knees. Even if they were fine with him taking off time, he still had to work on all the stuff he had left behind and that will be the kicker. He was already repulsed by the idea and also itching to start right away to get it behind him. After all, it would be not the first time he was working night shift to meet his deadlines.

A hand shook him out of his thoughts, as it gripped his shoulder, Sylvie glancing down at it in tired contemplation.

“Hey, you good?”

It’s been the third time he was asked, and even though the response sat on the tip of his tongue, he couldn’t get it over his lips. He told everybody he was fine, and he really was. It could be worse right now.

He could have punctured his lung in his fall from the pile Mera had been standing on. He could have hit his head or damaged any other limb that had not been tucked in safely. He could have, if not for Molly, shattered every single piece of bone in his rib cage into tiny pieces.

He could have lost his epithet.

He could have lost his epithet for longer than a few minutes, keeping the cold at bay, trying to force heat where nothing was. He could have stayed curled up on the floor and tried to breathe through dust and grime and try to get his bearings back, even though the biggest part of him had turned to nothing. He could have lost conscious for longer than he had, or Molly couldn't have been able to get the amulet. He could have lost his epithet forever, if the amulet had absorbed it. Giovanni could have escaped with no intention of returning, taking Sylvie's epithet with him. He could have died in that museum if that had happened, the cold spreading through his limbs and freezing him from the inside out. Or maybe not even that fast. Maybe he would have been dying right now and no one would have known what to do, because no one had their epithet stolen before. He actually could have been dying right now.

Or worse, it could have happened to Molly if he hadn't grabbed Mera fast enough.

Molly could have been thrown off the pile and she could have been the one with her ribs crushed or she could have been the one to puncture her lungs, her heart, she could have been freezing and dying right now.

No, no it could have been way worse.

But even with that simple thought in mind, he must have thought too long, because Giovanni shook his head, as he patted Sylvie's back, letting out a heavy huff.

"You don't need to be. I know this sucks. I've never broken anything before, maybe my finger in 8th grade, but I can't imagine what it's like to stay in a place that smells of chemicals like 99 percent of the time. Though, you're used to it, aren't you?"

"I'm a psychologist, not a physician."

"Sure, those are totally different things."

Sylvie tried to find the sarcasm, but it seemed as if Giovanni was honestly and truly trying to cover up the fact that he did not know what the difference was. Sylvie let out an almost fond but mostly annoyed sigh, as he laid his head back on his knees, watching as Giovanni stood up to check on Molly, who had turned over in her sleep. The captain made sure to have her covered properly once more, before he made a turn to the soup and pointed at it.

"Want some? I can heat it up, I found out where the breakrooms are, they won't notice."

Hesitation, before Sylvie nodded, hoping some food might do him good and help to break his endless sleeping cycle he had found himself in. He didn't find it in himself to say it out loud however and Giovanni only nodded back, taking the pot, first walking normally, before he risked a peek out the door. Then he made a turn, as dramatically as possible, and Sylvie had to roll his eyes as the door clicked shut.

Now he was back to watching the room, as he stared at the monitor, where his heartbeat was on display for everybody to see. It was weird to think of it that way. He was not in danger, not anymore, and still they kept him on this thing. Maybe they were just making sure that, if they had to check, it was worth their while. After all, they couldn't bend the bones back and glue them, checking on him was unnecessary. It was nice to be asked if he was in passable

condition, even if he pushed all advances of that sort from him like it was radioactive, but it also was a waste of time.

His eyes wandered back to the sleeping girl and he pulled his knees tighter under his chin, arms looping around them harder as he made sure her breathing was peaceful.

He wondered if Molly and Giovanni would really help him out to get to his apartment when he was free to go. He was pretty sure he wouldn't make it one step out without help, before he'd cringe and take a break, possibly just standing there for 5-minutes before he made it two and a half steps farther. Or he would just curl up at the front steps of the clinic since moving so far has proven to be too difficult anyway. He couldn't even lay down without having to panic, so how should he get across the city? He wasn't even sure if he was being whiny or if Mera's power really was just this strong.

The two of them did stay after all, and if they had been this willing to spend their evening here, who was he to tell them no if they offered assistance?

His brain started to turn into mush at this point. He felt as if his thoughts were rolling and tackling into each other like his sheep and he couldn't decide if he should let them roam and ignore or start to sort them out.

The smell of tomato soup suddenly greeted him however, and he noticed Giovanni already by his side, pot back in its place, ladle in hand. He was pouring some of the steaming liquid into a ceramic bowl, holding it out to the 15-year old right after.

"Here you go," he grinned with a flourish of his hand, Sylvie holding on to the warmth, pressing it close to his chest, "You disassociate a lot or is today a special occasion?"

Instead of answering Sylvie took a sip avoiding eye contact, only then to hum approvingly, surprised almost, as he looked up. "It's good."

"Who do you take me for? Of course it's good! I seasoned it myself!" He stepped back, before he coughed, his self-confidence dropping to a begrudging, faked disinterest. "After she made it of course. I didn't make the soup after all; I know nothing about soup. I only helped a tiny bit."

Sylvie continued to sip, staring from over the brim of his bowl at the other, a brow rising.

"Fine, whatever. I helped a lot. Don't tell anyone else."

"As if I had anybody else to talk to."

That was a slip of the tongue, curse his loose mouth.

Giovanni immediately dropped the act, as he stared at Sylvie with a soft look, who he evaded by looking into his soup, biting his lips, knowing he had said too much.

He should watch out what he was saying; Molly was no villain, she had been roped into all of this by mistake (because of him) but the captain, he was not as trustworthy, not in his opinion, no matter how dumb he acted and no matter how careful he seemed around them. He

didn't know either of them enough, and he was ready to cooperate back then because of necessity, (and he did start to care if Molly got hurt, because she had cared that he could have been hurt, for no reason) but today was today. They could just as fast turn around and forget the whole museum incident. He would have if he had been in their position. (Probably, most likely, he wasn't that sure anymore.)

"Kid, you're kind of freaking me out."

This time Sylvie couldn't stop the growl that vibrated out of his throat, before he clasped the bowl, his teeth gritting: "I'm not a kid."

"Okay then, touchy subject, we all got them," Giovanni nodded, "Sylvie, you're freaking me out. You're turning on and off like a shaky lamp on low batteries. That thousand-yard stare is creepy, my dude."

That made Sylvie clench the porcelain harder, now emptied and its contents sloshing in his otherwise empty stomach. He felt better, a lot so and he wished the soup had given him just a bit more strength to break it, just to let some of his stress out. Just to have a moment where he could worry about the broken pieces of ceramic instead of his insides, that squirmed every time he made a wrong move. It seemed he was out of the loop concerning social interactions, the guy who made money out of figuring them out, and it felt degrading. Back on that night he had felt the same, a chill rising up his back.

He was not a damn kid.

He had a PhD, he had left on top of his class, the youngest psychologist to grace Sweet Jazz City. He had his own apartment and had his own job. He was not a stupid kid who ran around aimlessly for some fun. He had his goals and he had his limitations, sure, but he was not a kid. Even if that woman had tricked him, and even if Giovanni had bested him in their fight, and even if Mera had crushed his chest and stolen his epithet, he was not a kid. Even if Molly had offered him friendship, he had taken it like an adult and not like a stupid kid, he could take care of himself, he had just been unlucky that night. He was mature enough to realize that he had stood against something bigger than him, that made him an adult. It was stupid bad luck, that's all that it was, a batch of bad luck.

Not a kid, just an adult with rotten luck.

"Let me take this."

Sylvie flinched harder than he should have when Giovanni grabbed the bowl he was pressing his fingers against, his white fingertips turning back to a softer shade of pink when he released the dish. Giovanni seemed to ignore the fact that he had backed off from him, calmly setting it down and sitting back in his chair, crossing his arms, tilting his head, as if he was waiting for Sylvie to speak.

"…What?"

"Talk to me, what's eating you?"

“It is none of your business.” If he had been a cat, he was sure his fur would have startled to bristle in defiance. “I know what you are doing, jokes on you. Mind games are my playing field.”

At that the older let out a laugh and waved his hand as if he was brushing the comment away like a pesky fly. He seemed entirely too comfortable, but Sylvie wasn’t blind. (He was blind as a bat, but not blind) He could see the tense shoulders, the jaw clenched too hard to be comfortable and it seemed as if Giovanni had some rough days behind him as well. Whatever villain thing he did, he must have still been exhausted, and here he sat, patient as could be.

“I’m not trying to interrogate you. Heck, we could talk about what I’ve been doing yesterday, but if you keep staring into space, you will fly off. I know you have those sleepy powers, but I don’t think your head is that much up in the clouds.” He shrugged. “Bear trap did open up about her mom after all. I’m good to talk to. You can open up, too.”

Sylvie wasn’t sure if that was an intentional or plain accidental ego boost, he gave from himself, but on the other hand, he had listened in on their private conversation for the tiniest amount. And he had to admit, Giovanni might be in his opinion stupid as a brick, but also had a big heart for a villain. If Molly trusted him this much, maybe he was not as bad as he feared.

He felt torn.

Sylvie didn’t need to talk, there was nothing to talk about after all. So, he had been hurt, that was the end of the conversation. It had hurt bad, and he thought he might die, but he didn’t, so why should he say it out loud? He could rationalize it all, he was mentally capable of stemming the weight. He was fine, his epithet was where it belonged and he had made the right decision to trust Molly and save her, since he had been the one to trap her in the first place. He had already asked Molly if they were friends back at the museum, worried that he had messed up, that she wouldn’t forgive him (Rationally, it wasn’t his fault entirely, she had been tired and his dust did become stronger through the years, but that was no excuse) That had already been a layer he had ripped off by force, to make sure that; yes, she was. The first friend he made was not going to run from him. And he had done the right thing and his fear of her getting hurt wasn’t misplaced.

So, what if he had been hurt? He could handle it, he was fine. He was going to be fine now.

There was nothing to unpack.

He was fine, it had hurt, but it was over.

The emptiness, the cold was gone.

It took him a second to realize that there was actual heat radiating, suddenly a much bigger hand than his own on his cheek, as he blinked up and found Giovanni a few inches from his face. This time he didn’t flinch, too focused on the fact that the foreign thumb was running under his eyelid. His cheeks burned, but he was too speechless to say anything, as Giovanni frowned in concern, leaving the cheek with a soft pet, before he set it on his shoulder.

“You’re crying.”

“I am?”

That made him lift a hand to his face, and he had to admit it came off wet, watching the water drip from his fingertip down to the duvet. He blinked once more and felt more gather and flow down his cheeks, his hand starting to tremble.

Okay then.

Maybe he wasn’t completely fine after all.

“I guess you have so much to say, your body just went “let’s dumb all the garbage out”, what do you think?”

The only answer he could give was to tremble harder, letting out a shaky breath. He could hear the monitor start to beep faster and somehow that made the whole being upset thing worse, as he pushed his hand over his one eye, pushing his glasses to sit atop of his head, trying to block the view of the glowing dial. Giovanni seemed to understand as he pushed his chair closer, circling his right arm around his shoulder to block the light and pulling him closer, gently forcing him to press the side of his head against his chest. From there he used the other hand to pet his bed hair, ruffling it, only then to comb it back into place.

“It hurt.”

“What did? The bones breaking? Your epithet?”

Sylvie felt his eyes burn, but he saw no use in brushing the saltwater around, instead deciding that grabbing the blanket and closing his fists around it as more practical.

“That I couldn’t help Molly.”

Giovanni nodded simply, stealing a glance to the peacefully sleeping Bear Trap and both of them went quiet. With time the beeping quieted down and Sylvie was able to close his eyes, still tired out of his mind. It had been a long while since anybody had hugged him, and if he was completely honest, he couldn’t remember when the last meaningful human touch he had received was besides a hearty handshake from his professors or his clients. Molly’s hug had already been a shock to the system, a good one. And the half hug felt actually nice as he leaned into the other, Giovanni rubbing his arm as if to keep it from getting cold.

“It’s okay. You tried, and you succeeded, in buying us time. All fights hurt, but we all made it out relatively okay. Licking wounds after is normal, too. We’ll help you with yours.”

Arguing was out of the question, the ‘we’ stressed like he was trying to beat it into Sylvie’s skull. As if to prove that point, he fixed the blanket, pulling the corner over Sylvie’s shoulder, before he let him settle his head under his chin, propping him up so he could lean his whole bodyweight into the larger man. Once again Giovanni picked the glasses up, settling them neatly onto the table, before he carded his hand through orange hair, Sylvie gone the second time he brushed through it.

The fifth time he woke up he felt calm.

He remembered how he had fallen asleep, and that's where he found himself, exactly the same pose. Giovanni stayed like a pillar holding him safely, head tilted on top of his own. For a second he was afraid he might have drooled on him, but his mouth was closed, and Sylvie sighed in pure relief. When his eyes wandered, he noticed that the lump on the other bed was gone, and instead he felt pressure to his right side. He tilted his head down and found Molly curled up there, hugging his arm like she had with the pillow before, pressing her head partially into the pillow behind him and his shoulder. He could move his forearm and he petted her hand that was gripping his white shirt, before he moved past it so he could remove Giovanni's arm from around his neck. It hadn't been uncomfortable, but Molly hung to him like a bag, straining to stay in her position. So, he laid down, Giovanni now sitting tilted but still fast asleep, while Molly mumbled something about 5 minutes.

Sylvie took another deep breath as he stared at the ceiling, still baffled they had stayed.

Sensing that Molly was about to wake up he relaxed in his cushions, not wanting to scare her if she needed to find her bearings back first. From the corner of his eyes he saw her lift her hand to her eyes to rub them, letting out the softest yawn he had ever heard, before she sat up, stretching her arm above her, while the other held it by the elbow. She smacked her lips then, before she gazed down, where Sylvie lifted his hand to wave at her.

"You're awake already?" she gasped, her face turning nervous for a second, "Did I wake you? I saw Giovanni holding you and I thought that would help you sleep. Did it help?"

He had to swallow down the frown that tried to cross his face, the apology forming in his throat, as he instead shook his head a smile making its way onto it: "It did help. I slept great, promise."

"Oh, good…," she nodded to herself, before she struggled to get off the bed, Sylvie watching as she jumped to her feet, "I have to see what time it is, if the nurses bust us, we will be in big trouble."

He had almost forgotten about the fact, as she unlocked her phone, sucking in a breath, as she let it fall back into her bag just as fast.

"We are so going to get in trouble."

A second after she was shaking Giovanni awake, who grumbled in annoyance, his arms flailing, before he lost his balance entirely and he landed butt first on the floor. He snapped his head back and forth, opening his mouth to scream something, only to be shushed by Molly's epithet, her hand in front of her mouth so he would get the message to quiet down. Both then packed their things and stood ready, Giovanni peeking out to see if the coast was clear.

"We can wait downstairs and act like we just came in, okay?" Molly explained, before she became unsure, "If you want us to get you home. If you don't, we can just leave, and you can call when you're there."

For a moment he chanced a glance at Giovanni who looked back at them with a neutral face, Sylvie knowing neither of them would be angry if he declined their help. But he had to be honest with himself, he needed it. And he really wanted their help, their company, as long as he could get it without overstaying his presence.

That is why he nodded to her.

“Yeah, I’d love you guys to help.”

And so Molly and Giovanni escaped the room, sneaking their way out of the hospital, only so they could come back in like innocent citizens to pick him up. The procedure was a short one, they let him off the heart monitor, shoved painkillers into his hands and another date to check on his ribs, before he was taking the elevator down to the reception, his own clothes back on his person. Immediately after the door slid open, he saw the two of them standing to the side, noticing him immediately. From there, Giovanni offered his shoulder and Molly her pain numbing as they made it out of the hospital in the bright morning sun. Both of them made their excitement known as they asked about his apartment and where he worked, Sylvie replying enthusiastically.

He had never been this awake before.

End Notes

I wrote this 2 days ago and finished it today in fear that the new episode will immediately oudate this. I love the found family trope too much to not have written something for the 3 of them.

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